

2014 SPPC Minutes

Present:

Chairman and Secretary: Christian Krause (GER), Roberto Ricca (ITA)

Councillors: Shaun Press (PNG), Geurt Gijssen (NED)

Members: Tony Rich (USA), Rathinam Anantharam (IND)

Observers: Jouni Lehtivaara (FIN), George Githui Wanjiku (KEN), Alex Holowczak (ENG), Igor Vereshchagin (RUS), Arthur Schuering (NED), Otto Milvang (NOR), Ashot Vardapetyan (ARM), Gopakumar M.S (IND), Almog Burstein (ISR), Daniel Kelvin (BAR), Kezzie Msukwa (MAW), Gunther Van den Bergh (RSA), Andre White (BAH), Md. Rashed (BAN), Roger Tirouamodimo (BOT), Jan Berglund (PLW), Ely Saul Sequera (VEN), Gunter Deleyn (BEL), Jan Wikander (SWE), Bo Berg (SWE), Kevin Bonham (AUS), Mkumbwa Gilton (MAW) Ismael Tawfeeq Asaad (IRQ), Mohammed Khamaysa (PLE), Alex McFarland (SCO), Samir Zerdali (ALG), Ralph Alt (GER), Nick Faulks (BER)

1. Re-endorsement of Swiss Pairings Programs

As it was first decided in Istanbul and re-enforced last year in Tallinn, all the programs that got their endorsement before 2011 had to be endorsed again.

SwissManager	<p>A new version (Build 11 and successive updates) has been released to the general public. In such version, Swiss Manager integrates the same pairing engine already used by the endorsed program Vega (JaVaFo).</p> <p>Therefore, the only real check was to verify the correct flux of information between Swiss Manager and JaVaFo and vice versa. When this was perfected, no further check was needed, as the proper use of JaVaFo is enough to ensure that the generated pairings are correct. Therefore, this program was re-endorsed.</p>
TournamentService	<p>The situation is similar to Swiss Manager, as also TournamentService (with its new version 6.2 already available to the general public.) integrates the JaVaFo pairing engine. Therefore, this program was re-endorsed.</p>
Swiss Master	<p>The Royal Dutch Federation made a complete revision of the pairing engine. They also prepared a Pairings Checker, as requested by this committee, which was used to test the pairings produced by another software.</p> <p>The version (5.6.0 Build 9) that is ready to be published on the KNSB website shows 141 discrepancies with the JaVaFo engine out of 26231 tested rounds (discrepancy rate is 0.54%). The great majority of them depend on an interpretation of C.12 that the programmer is willing to align to the JaVaFo interpretation. In conclusion, the pairing engine seems quite close to perfection. As the differences with JaVaFo are within reasonable limits and the C12 issue will be fixed in a reasonable time, this program was re-endorsed.</p>
Tournament Director	<p>The author never contacted us in two years. Unfortunately this led to the dropping of its endorsement.</p>
Win Swiss	<p>As requested, the author prepared a Pairings Checker that works fine, but it also shows that the internal engine is not always producing compliant pairings.</p> <p>As the author worked to accomplish our requests, but did not finish in time its work, it was decided to suspend the endorsement but not to drop it and leave at the next SPP councilors the task to make a definitive decision before January 15th, 2015.</p>

2. Review of the endorsement procedure

The handbook should be a collection of rules. Some notes may be allowed, just to clarify the most difficult rules, but nothing more. The section C.04.04 is currently too verbose and descriptive. Moreover, it seems to describe things that are only related to the Dutch System, while the endorsement procedure should be extended, at least theoretically, to all the available systems.

Below it is presented an early draft (yet incomplete) that describes in more proper way the endorsement procedure, at it is done now.

C.04.4.1 Introduction

To perform big Swiss tournaments the use of Computer programs for handling the players' data, the pairings and the results is necessary.

To avoid misunderstandings and to support the organisers and arbiters, FIDE recommends the use of computer programs which are endorsed by FIDE after a successful endorsement procedure.

The endorsement will last as long as it is not withdrawn because the program does no longer meet the requirements.

C.04.4.2 The endorsement procedure for a pairing system

Each author of a program that helps to manage a chess tournament can apply for the FIDE endorsement compiling a form (TBD).

For an endorsement application to be considered, a program must be able to manage Swiss tournaments using one of the pairing systems approved by FIDE (see C.04.3.1-4). The endorsement is given for the specific pairing systems (one or more).

Besides this, a program must have:

- capability to import and export files written in the FIDE format (TRF - see the proper chapter)
- public availability of a (free) pairings-checker (FPC - see the proper chapter)
- the default pairing system for new tournaments must be one of the systems for which the endorsement is requested.
- operations disallowed by FIDE (for instance, distribute full point byes) should not be available by default in an endorsed tournament-manager and the users should be warned (not prevented, though) when trying to make them available

It is recommended, but not strictly requested, the public availability of a generator of simulated tournaments (RTG, see the proper chapter)

C.04.4.3 Tournament Report File (TRF)

To be agreed with QC

C.04.4.4 (Free) Pairings Checker (FPC)

An **External Pairings Checker** is a tool embedded in the tournament-manager containing the pairing-engine that can be freely used by external people (without the user interface).

For instance, let's suppose that the executable name of a pairing software is PairingsProgram.exe. When it is launched (either by a command prompt or double-clicking on it), it normally opens a user interface and ... how it works from that point on is not important from the (*External Pairings*) **checker** viewpoint.

What it is expected from a **checker** is the possibility to launch PairingsProgram.exe from a command prompt with some parameters, something like:

PairingsProgram.exe -check FIDE_Report_File.fid

The **checker** must read the FIDE_Report_File.fid (which is a TRF), rebuild the tournament and pair each round using the embedded pairing-engine, and output a report describing which pairings are right or wrong in the "*opinion*" of the pairing-engine.

C.04.4.5 Random Tournament Generator (RTG)

The RTG is a freely available tool that generates a full TRF for a simulated tournament.

C.04.4.6 The first endorsement procedure for a pairing system

A subcommittee of four people must be named at the first Congress that follows the application for the endorsement of a program. Such a subcommittee must report at the next Congress whether the program deserves to be endorsed.

C.04.4.7 Endorsement for pairings systems when other programs have already been endorsed for the same pairing system

As the endorsement procedure can be executed in a semi-computerized way and all the tools needed for the endorsement are freely available to the authors, the endorsement request can reach the SPP secretariat at any moment as long as it is at least four months before the Congress where it would be presented.

If an external RTG is available, it will be used to generate 5000 random tournaments. Such tournaments will be given in input to the candidate FPC and each discrepancy will be collected. Such discrepancies may depend on either:

- an error in the input file (i.e. responsibility of the endorsed program which provided the RTG) *[or]*
- an error coming from the candidate *[or]*
- an interpretation divergency caused by unclear rules

Errors of the first type shall be directed to the RTG producer. Errors of the second type must be corrected before the candidate gets the endorsement. Problems of the third type are redirected to the SPP, which should issue a statement describing the proper interpretation and then fix the problems in the successive revision of the rules.

If the candidate has its own RTG, the latter is used to generate 5000 random tournaments, which will be then given in input to one (or more) of the available FPC(s). The analysis of the discrepancies is conducted in the same way as above.

If no RTG is available, a RTG available for another pairing system is used to generate 5000 random tournaments. Such tournaments will be given in input to both the candidate FPC and one (or more) of the available FPC(s). The discrepancies to be analyzed are the ones that are different among the various FPC(s)

C.04.4.8 Currently endorsed programs

A list with the endorsed programs and useful information related to them should be available on the FIDE pairings website.

3. New candidates for endorsement

No new candidates were presented for this session.

4. Experiences with the (Dutch System) wording

The Norwegian FA **Otto Milvang**, besides noticing that the current wording of A7.e is not coherent to what the articles C.10.e says, discovered a weird behaviour of the rules A7.d and A7.e in special situations. His example showed that the same set of players is paired in two different ways depending on the round being odd or even.

It was decided to amend the rules in the next revision (*see below*).

5. Necessary amendments to the Dutch Swiss Rules

Besides the problems with the current rules that were shown and briefly discussed in Tallinn (2013), some new problems were presented this year (*see above*). In order to avoid discussing a partial draft, this committee decided to postpone to the next Congress the presentation of a full draft for an amendment of the current Dutch Rules.

6. Adjustment of the TRF files to cover unplayed games

The TRF format, formally presented during the Torino Congress in 2006, has been used since then to transmit tournament data from the national rating officers to the FIDE rating server. It is a format tailored to support

the transmission of rating information, so, when it comes to unrated games, there is no need for it to be accurate. Full-point byes, half-point byes, players' announced absences or retirements, forfeited games (wins or losses), games that lasted less than one move, all of them could be bunched together with no impact on the rating process.

In 2010 this format started to be used also to exchange **pairing** information between pairing engines and checkers. In such cases, the information of unplayed games, and also the kind of these unplayed games, is extremely important and must be recorded accurately.

This committee has recognized the following types of unplayed/unrated games:

TYPE	Description	Solution
Forfeited games	Games that were scheduled but one or both players showed up late or not at all	The game should be recorded with a code that keeps track of the pairing, including the colours, with the appropriated forfeit result.
Announced absence	Retirement from the tournament and the absence from a single round may be dealt differently, but there is no actual need to make such distinction.	Two different codes could be defined (in order to be back-compatible), but they could be used indifferently
Half-point bye	Widely used practice just introduced in the Competition Rules.	A specific code (HPB-code) should be used to record this. It may be present multiple times for round.
Full-point bye	This committee does NOT recommend a similar practice but (unfortunately) is being used and therefore it should be supported.	A specific code (FPB-code) should be used to record this. It may be present multiple times for round.
Unpaired player	It is the classical bye, the one that is given to the player that remains unpaired in a field with an odd number of players	A special code, different by HPB-code and FPB-code, should be used to record this. This code can be present just once for round.
Unrated played games	Games like 1.d4 (cellphone-rings) 1-0 (or 0-1) or 1.Nf3 draw are regular played games (they can't be repeated during the tournament) but, accordingly to the current rating regulations, they are not rated.	A special code is needed to record these particular situations.

Here is a preliminary proposal (to be discussed with QC):

<i>When two players are involved in an unplayed/unrated game, pppp and aaaa represent the pairing-id(s) of the involved players. pppp is the present player (for unplayed games) or the one playing with white (for unrated games), aaaa is his scheduled opponent.</i>			
TYPE	Proposed solution		
Forfeited games	(pppp) : aaaa w + (aaaa) : pppp b -	(or)	(pppp) : aaaa b + (aaaa) : pppp - -
Announced absence	(pppp) : 0000 - -	(or)	(pppp) : <i>(all blanks code)</i>
Half-point bye	(pppp) : 0000 - H		
Full-point bye	(pppp) : 0000 - F		
Unpaired player	(pppp) : 0000 - B		
Unrated played games	(pppp) : aaaa w W (pppp) : aaaa w D (pppp) : aaaa w L	(and)	(aaaa) : pppp b L (aaaa) : pppp b D (aaaa) : pppp b W
Standard game	(pppp) : aaaa w 1 (pppp) : aaaa w = (pppp) : aaaa w 0	(and)	(aaaa) : pppp b 0 (aaaa) : pppp b = (aaaa) : pppp b 1

7. Website organization

This committee thanks for the opportunity to manage the website **pairings.fide.com** and it gives the task to itself to improve it.

8. Accelerated systems

The general idea is to define the acceleration methods that are commonly used, describing them with as much detail as possible. After that, it would be possible to put into the rules, in a specific section yet to be created, the ones that QC agrees that may be used in title tournaments.

9. Time target for obligatory use of endorsed programs for valid titles

This Committee asks for a commitment from FIDE to have all its Swiss rated tournaments be run by an endorsed program or at least be verified by the External Pairings Checker of an endorsed program, as this guarantees that the pairings will follow the rules defined in the FIDE handbook.

Realizing that *all Swiss rated tournaments* is a very big target, this Committee proposes that at least all Swiss tournaments valid for title must be run or verifiable by an endorsed software.

The proposal is for a target date of **July 1st, 2019**, as this date seems well integrated in the process of revision and re-endorsement of the pairings engines.

10. Acknowledgements

The recently updated Arbiters' Manual (2014 version) contains a work about a step by step pairings procedure in a simulated tournament as well as an annotated version of the Dutch System rules that were approved in Tallinn FIDE Congress. This is a document of enormous usefulness for everybody that is willing to improve his knowledge on the Dutch System.

The above work (which can be retrieved also on the Arbiters' website, under **Various Contributions** with the title **Tournament development with the Swiss Dutch System**) was prepared by the Italian National Arbiter Mario Held. This committee wishes to thank him for his excellent work.